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THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH IN RELATION TO THE STRUGGLING CLASSES. V A READING COURSE FOR MINISTERS

ALLAN HOBEN

Associate Professor of Practical Theology, University of Chicago

Part V. Voluntary Associations and Church Co-operation

REQUIRED READING

Louise de Koven Bowen, *Safeguards for City Youth at Work and at Play.*

Paul Moore Strayer, *The Reconstruction of the Church.*

COLLATERAL READING

Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House;* also *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets,* and *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil.*

John Dewey, *School and Society;* also *Moral Principles in Education.*

C. Hanford Henderson, *What Is It to Be Educated?*

William B. Forbush, *The Boy Problem;* also *Church Work with Boys.*

Joseph Lee, *Play and Playgrounds.*

Charles Stelzle, *Boys of the Street; How to Win Them.*

Henry F. Cope, *The Modern Sunday School in Principle and Practice;* also *Religious Education in the Family.*

Sophonisba P. Breckinridge (ed.), *The Child in the City.*

1. Voluntary Associations

It is no uncommon thing for several organizations to be working with a family in which delinquency has developed; and sometimes a spurious pro-

fessional pride or a desire for "credit" makes effective co-operation impossible. This is unfortunate, for no adequate probation service can be created without the help of affiliated social agencies. Overlapping, conflicting counsel and methods, waste, and pauperism are likely to follow this sort of social bungling.

On the other hand, the probation service which seeks to prevent or cure delinquency can never be sufficient in and of itself. This fine art of constructive friendship consists in assembling and directing all suitable social agencies to the end that the endangered child may be safeguarded and the delinquent child restored to good social deportment.

As a rule the juvenile court cannot do a great deal in investigating the social causes of delinquency; and therefore such associations as make a thorough study of saloons, dance halls, nickel shows, poolrooms, amusement parks, street vending, gambling, bathing-beaches, tobacco stores, cheap hotels, cabarets, lying-in-hospitals, excursion boats, girls' wages, penny arcades, obscene literature, etc., are often able to

formulate and secure protective legislation. In this way something is done to cut off the supply of delinquency near the source.

Similarly, organizations or commissions which secure the facts relative to housing, family incomes, immigrants, negroes, defectives, illegitimate, etc., with a view to amelioration by private endeavor and public enactment, serve in a large way to prevent delinquency.

Co-operation is also rendered by those bodies which promote clean play and wholesome amusements, open schools as social centers, enlist children in gardening, organize and direct boys' and girls' clubs, awaken vocational interest, provide activities for summer vacation, conduct outings and camps, encourage music, dramatics, and all forms of innocent and happy self-expression.

Wherever the more important and specialized bodies—such as United Charities, Legal Aid, Juvenile Protective, and others—can be correlated in a Central Council of Social Agencies, better results can be secured, and the court which works hand in hand with these articulated forces will achieve proportionately more for the children.

If the reader will make a list of all the welfare societies of his community he will be able to indicate by diagram how the agencies of investigation, prosecution, agitation, and constructive endeavor relate themselves to society's most important concern, the welfare of the child.

2. Church Co-operation

Most significant for our present study, however, is the part which the church may play in preventing and curing de-

linquency. To be sure, the measure of altruism awakened and supplied by the message of Jesus is quite beyond our power to estimate. It has been the glory of the church to inspire devotion to the weak and helpless and to supply champions in every line of heroic endeavor for humanity without directing the details of method or keeping books to display her own merit. And, despite her faults, so faithfully has she proclaimed the duty of the strong toward the weak, the rich to the poor, and the wise to the ignorant, that we have reached a time when service of this sort is the commonly accepted standard of success. Within our own time we have witnessed such a reversal of standards that no one regards wealth, learning, or power, either alone or together, as constituting success. These are honored only in the degree in which they serve human welfare. To this degree is society Christianized, and the church has done it.

But this is not enough, for the church may be a great aid in handling specific cases of delinquency. Not over 7 or 8 per cent of delinquents profess no church connection, and the pastor above all others should be a trusted counselor to the family in trouble. Yet out of 481 cases studied in Chicago it was found that in only 15 had a pastor or church official rendered any assistance. The blame is to be shared partly by the probation officer who fails to enlist the religious adviser, but there still remains an ample share for the pastor himself.

Again, while Jews and Romanists maintain their faithful representatives in court, the Protestants fail to do so. The situation is no better when children

are to be returned from institutional treatment for a new start. Ideally the religious group would be advised in advance, and provision would be made to throw every helpful influence about the child in his fresh endeavor.

If pastors will take the initiative, it is not too much to hope that they will be able to work out a plan of co-operation with probation officers whereby these needs will be met and judicious friendly visiting may be supplied to endangered families. One thinks also of the larger use which might be made of Christian homes for detached, lonely, and tempted young people in our great cities. The normal home is the best social settlement, and if all the homes of a congregation were dedicated to some measure of friendly, saving hospitality a vast aggregate of good would be accomplished.

Furthermore, the church group needs information on present issues, problems, and needs. The standard agencies working for childhood should be well represented before the church people. Possibly the mid-week meeting offers a good opportunity for delegates from these bodies or for church people working in these fields to present the facts. Surely earnest conference and prayer may well center about the battle for the salvation of the children.

It is obvious also that the church cannot know the exact nature of her task without being informed as to the constructive and destructive agencies of her parish. This means a survey. Many pastors are beating the air because they do not know the location of the enemy. If we are going to save the soul of youth we must know the opposing

forces which set themselves in array for its capture.

Even more important is the necessity of positive methods which will enlist the interest of boys and girls: the weekday activities of clubs, the wholesome development of athletics, music, dramatics, and in general the participation of religious people in the absorbing interests of youth. The success of Boy Scouts and Camp-Fire Girls is indicative of possibilities here, and shows how great an opportunity confronts the church.

But finally the church must preserve her democracy, not handing out benefits, but directing, aiding, and sanctioning the endeavor of the people to secure fulness of life. In fairness to the standard effort of the church we must confess that no devices of pleasure or of law finally serve to prevent delinquency, but only an inward life of spiritual control dedicated to the will of Christ and resolved to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. The best way to keep out of trouble is to be busy doing good.

Topics for Discussion

1. To what extent can the mid-week meeting be made a forum for the presentation of welfare conditions and for conference and prayer over these human issues?
2. What federated action can the churches of your community take in the interests of child protection?
3. Formulate a policy whereby the church may render greater service to children and young people. Consider pastoral and pulpit work, Sunday school, young people's society, clubs, etc., in the

light of the standard interests of childhood and youth.

4. Discuss the problem of sex morality.
5. Discuss the relation of the church to the play movement.

6. Arrange for your ministerial body to visit the court and institutions dealing with delinquents and confer with the authorities on practical methods of co-operation.

SUGGESTIONS TO LEADERS OF CLASSES USING THE COURSE "THE MESSAGE OF JESUS TO OUR MODERN LIFE"

STUDY IX THE VICARIOUS LIFE

As we come to this last month of study of the religion of Jesus and its bearing upon our own lives, we clearly see that the ultimate purpose of this course has been to incite to action on an intelligent basis. The life of the average individual relates itself to the family, the church, the community, the state, and the nation. The great difficulty is that these relationships are not understood, their responsibilities are not adequately fulfilled, and the result is inferiority in the individual, as well as in the organizations of society to which he is related. The work of this month should therefore gather up in definite form the principles which have been set forth in the religion of Jesus, and frankly discuss the way in which these principles would work out if they were intelligently applied in modern social relationships.

The leader will find it necessary to use his own judgment in deciding whether to make these discussions large and comprehensive, or to take certain definite local situations and discuss them tentatively, sending the members of the class out for investigation and further discussion after investigations have been completed.

No formal programs will be given for the meetings of this month, but the following questions will furnish a basis for review and

discussion. They may well be combined with the questions which appear in the last study under the head of "Conclusion."

1. What do we mean by the "vicarious life"?
2. Is it right to seek honors? Is it right to accept them when unsought?
3. Is it Christlike to cultivate influential friends to the neglect of faithful ones of more humble station?
4. Can we trust our own motives in choosing friends?
5. Is there any person or group whose interests we place before our own?
6. What hindrances to ideal family life do we see in our community?
7. How far may a man or woman allow business or religious obligations to interfere with the claims of the family upon his time and interest?
8. Can Christian people enjoy all forms of amusement? If not, upon what principles must the line be drawn, and will the answer be the same in all communities?
9. How far should the church look after the social interests of its members?
10. What responsibility has the church to the community outside its own members?
11. What responsibility has the church at large for the world at large?